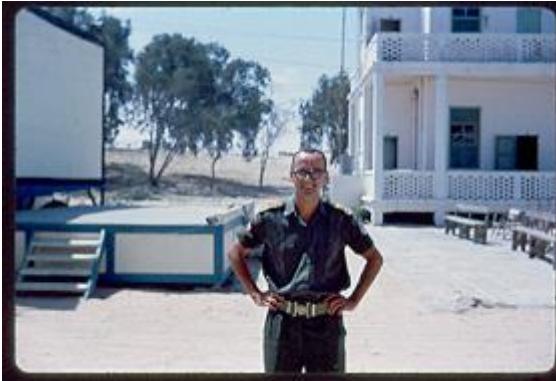


Captain Gord Jenkins



UNEF 1

DIARY 1962 –1963

El Arish/Gaza/Rafah/Beirut



Military – United Nations Emergency Force 1

Country or Area	Short Form of Mission Name	Time Length	Size of Mission	Max. Contribution	Name of Operation and Mandate
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Egypt	UNEF 1	1956-1967	6,073	1,007	United Nations Emergency Force. Supervise withdrawal of French, British and Israeli forces from Sinai
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Reference:

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacekeeping/missions-en.asp>

HISTORY

TO UNEF 1

- 1956 to 1967

Lester B. Pearson has become an icon for Canada's international peacekeeping reputation. His innovation of a peacekeeping force for the 1956 Suez Canal crisis was a landmark move. France, Israel and the United Kingdom had been trying to stop Egypt from taking control of the Suez Canal. Pearson, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, proposed an international force under the UN flag be deployed to ease the conflict.

The first UN peacekeeping force, UNEF I, supervised the withdrawal of armed forces from Egyptian territory and served as a buffer between Egypt and Israel after the withdrawal. The operation was led by Canadian General E. L. M. Burns (also the commander of the UNTSO operation) and lasted until May 1967 when Egypt managed to convince UN forces to leave. However, in 1973 they returned to the Suez Canal under the second mission (UNEF II), which lasted for six years.

Pearson's efforts won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957, while the Peace Prize went to the In the late 1950s -early 1960s , a Canadian military overseas Peacekeeping "tour" was for a whole year- now a tour is defined by the Canadian military as 6 months. I spent from 4 March 1965 to end of June 1966 – 2 ½ tours – rounded out to a metal number "3" tours on my campaign badge or ribbon of UNEF 1.



Reference:

http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/military/peace_keeping/canada.html

Canada would contribute logistics and communications elements and a recce squadron to this effort. The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps RCAC 56 Recce Squadron was formed, equipped with Ferret scout cars and dispatched to the Middle East.

56 Recce Squadron would establish many of the observation posts and camps, which would be used by several succeeding contingents. In January of 1959, D (Recce) Squadron replaced the 8th Hussars Recce Squadron in the Sinai.

On 1 March 1959, a Ferret commanded by Corporal Babcock was escorting a ration truck to an observation post known as Winnipeg. The Ferret struck an antitank mine buried in the patrol track that sheared the front right wheel and the storage bins right off of the car and penetrated the hull in the area of the driver's compartment. Trooper F.W.G. Pang suffered injuries to his right leg. Corporal Babcock and Private Crowe, who was riding in the Ferret with the crew, were both shaken up by the incident but unharmed.



On the morning of 28 November, two UNEF-marked jeeps were patrolling on the Demarcation Line. D Squadron had worked out a local agreement with the Egyptian Army so that the patrols could get around an area of impassable ground. The jeeps were three miles west of the Demarcation Line, conducting a routine patrol. In the lead vehicle were Lieutenant W.A. Jacobs and Trooper Ronald H. Allen.



A flare suddenly lighted the landscape and the jeeps came under fire from the front and both flanks. The crews bailed out and sought what cover they could. The shooting continued until Lieutenant Jacobs shouted "United Nations" several times. Some Egyptians infantrymen approached and told the patrol they had been warned and left. Lieutenant Jacobs discovered that Trooper Allen was gravely wounded. He died an hour after the attack while being evacuated in the surviving jeep, leaving a widow and a small daughter in Halifax. In February 1960, D Squadron packed its kit, received its medals and boarded a plane, leaving the Sinai and Trooper Allen behind.

Reference:

http://images.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.dragoons.ca/images/unef1_1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.dragoons.ca/history/UNEF.html&h=238&w=462&sz=38&tbnid=9VTiAKosnWgjEM:&tbnh=64&tbnw=125&hl=en&start=4&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2522UNEF%2B1%2522%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26sa%3DN

Observation

And we Canadians, specifically me as 25-year-old “peacekeepers” had been thrown into this complicated situation with next to zero training.

The Arabs and Jews had been fighting since 1948

- the “local inhabitants “ and Judea/Israel had been fighting since the Old Testament Bible was written –Gaza is mentioned in the old Testament! – check it out!!*

–

we were untrained “babes in the woods”. We should have learned in Cyprus that there is a difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking.

The first cardinal rule of peacekeeping is that the people in the country you are in have to “want you there” and “not as occupiers”.

In Cyprus I believe from what I saw the Turks and the Greeks wanted us there. In Sinai and Egypt the Egyptians wanted us there – Israel did NOT.

*Also my generation was the generation of idealism –Lester Pearson and his UN Peace Prize – Kennedy and his “Peace Corps” – full of idealism and “we could make a difference’. This was before Bosnia, which was our baptism to fire as peace **makers**- we failed – the Dutch failed even worse! Check out what happened to the Dutch in Kosovo! Then also there was Kuwait and the First Gulf War – the – God help us Canada in Afghanistan.*



this picture says it all – marching over sand dunes in helmets and “western” clothing!

Chapter 1 The HULL ARMOURIES Hull Quebec & Peacekeeping Training

I was informed I was to be posted to UNEF for a years unaccompanied two weeks before I was married- **12 December 1964**. I asked my boss in Oakville – I was working as CO of Army Recruiting Unit in Toronto – for a 6-month deferral so I could get marriage at least started. This request was turned down. I decided then I would get out of military

when I got back from my tour –I would “*do my duty*” – and then get out. I made two conditions :

- that I would get to be Major
- -get selected for Staff College –

and get out of Military. But the real reason – even if I did not get either of the above was that never again would I leave my wife at a train station or airport for a year. This resolution I kept. The WW2 mentality had not left the Canadian military – I had not seen my father when he was posted overseas from 1939 until 1945 – too long – my formative years I grew up minus father. Plus the wife was alone –or in this case mother to look after the family on her own – or be alone.

We had minimum training really for the Middle East and the Israeli- Arab conflict. I was sent in February from Toronto to Ottawa for three day “ UNEF Familiarization Training.” The course was held at a back room at the Hull Armory in a small room with no course material. The Course was given more or less “ad lib” by two returned officers from Peacekeeping and consisted of mostly pidgin Arabic training and war stories. They told us hair-raising war stories. They had great fun dressing up as Arabs -and using the 10 to 15 words they had learned in Egypt. They had dressed up in full Arab clothes and were outdoing each other with their tales of conquest and travels

This Course also introduced me to the Canadian military way of treating their people – their officers and men .We were put up at a one star hotel more noted for its bar than its rooms! The Canadian army put my new wife and I up at the cheapest hotel in Ottawa on Bank Street at Gilmour – the Alexandria - right above the bar.!!- boy was it noisy!! We moved to the Lord Elgin Hotel and I paid the difference out of my own pocket.

. This was the most valuable lesson –it introduced me to the attitude – rather “frugal” of the Military and either buy it yourself or scrounge the material. At this we became experts!

Then back to Toronto to wait for my “embarkation”. I left Jan at the railroad station in Toronto’s Union station. They actually still had a very bored looking Movement Control Officer at the Union station – a hang over from WW2.He made a guest appearance and left- his day done. I took train to Trenton and of course “the Military” sent me to Trenton 2 days before the Yukon airplane was to leave for Marville France. I sat around the Mess and phoned Jan a couple of times. The RCAF Mess in Trento had everything – a salad bar –great food –fresh fruit – current magazines and newspapers from across Canada.

Postscript

In El Arish the North Star aircraft would land with the rejects of magazines and newspapers from Base Trenton – these weeks old magazines and newspapers were our only source of news from Canada. All our radios – no matter how powerful - picked up 99% Arabic – except for the BBC which came through Radio Cyprus for 15 minutes in English for 15 minutes. I even picked up Chinese-it took me months to figure out how –it was “Radio Albania “ which was having a “love affair “at the time with mainland China and rebroadcasting Chinese – god knows why??

Observations

A year away from” kith and kin “is too long – even by today’s standards.

A Canadian military overseas Peacekeeping “tour” was for a whole year- now a tour is defined by the Canadian military as 6 months. I spent from 4 March 1965 to end of June 1966 – 2 ½ tours – rounded out to a metal number “3” tours on my campaign badge or ribbon of UNEF I. A year is too long for a single or married man to be away from his or her family in peacetime – wartime is a different matter.

The military soldier needs training on the country they are going to – customs/culture/history/context of their mission when abroad. The Canadians had been in Egypt from 1957-8 years - so really – by the time I went which was 1965 the Canadian military had time to get a thorough indoctrination course together. This was not the case.

From 11 March 1965 embarkation to 14 June 1966 return to Canada and two months of “disembarkation leave” – what they call now “post traumatic stress syndrome” which was unheard of in our day – we received not one day of counseling coming back from the Tour - and not one hour of debriefing by Intelligence or Security.

I had seen a “not so famous then” PLO leader Yassar Arafat every second day on the Caribou UNWRA flight from Beirut to Gaza and him coming back again- I knew every henchman of the PLO by face if not by name – as I lived at the Beirut airport every day – seven days a week. What I saw and what they told re in candor would have ‘melted their Canadian Army boots” – who cared then about a bunch of Arabs traveling as ragged UNWRA refugees to Gaza and back to Beirut – no one in those days!

Chapter 2 TRENTON CANADA to MARVILLE FRANCE - “Embarkation”

I had been ordered to take a self-addressed box with me for my military forage cap to mail back to Toronto – as we would be issued blue berets and a blue scarf in Trenton. I never wore my blue scarf my whole 18/19 months away – and the Canadian blue beret we were told to wear to Egypt where we would be issued with a real “Kangor” beret – a beauty which fitted perfectly. The Canadian beret was an abomination of a beret – thick – hung down over your ears to my collar! We ditched that soon as we got our Kagor berets. We called the Canadian berets “cow plops” :>)

The beautiful Kangor beret came with a metal UN badge – we never wore a cloth badge on our beret ever.

Finally we embarked for Marville France/Pisa/El Arish Egypt on 11 March 1965. We flew on a Yukon aircraft Trenton to Marville – really a Bristol Britannia aircraft – very comfortable and professionally done by the RCAF. Service and amenities as good as any airline. Then overnight and we boarded a North Star shuttle run to Egypt via Pisa.

Marville was a first class base – the PX was excellent – and the amenities such as swimming pool and gym and other facilities excellent. The French Government were not too happy with the Canadians at this time – after all – the Canadians were in Egypt after their botched effort with British and Israelis when the three attacked Egypt and captured the Suez Canal. They would have stayed – all three – but the Americans told them to get out! So the French were in the process of getting Canada out of Marville – and of getting France out of NATO!

Then Lester B Pearson came up with his Peacekeeping idea and won a Nobel prize. The North Star, which was to take us to El Arish on the tail, had a slot – just as we were to take off for Pisa/El Arish a UN metal decal was slipped in – it stayed on the tail all the way!

Two memories of Pisa – my shower in my room where French plumber had put red on cold water and green on hot water nob – very funny. And the French would not let us put UN on the aircraft so the North Star had a UN metal plate that was slid in on the tail just before we took off.

The North Star had Merlin Engines on a DC- 6 aircraft body. There has never been a noisier plane – and it shook /vibrated from the power. We- all 6 of us and a couple of tons of cargo rattled and shook our way to Pisa where we got a terrific welcome from the RCASC Movement Control Officer there – he took great pains to take us to hotel/to the market and to the Leaning Tower.

I remember the Italian hotel and the last bath I was to have for a year and a half. The bathtub you sat in-it was shaped like a chair with a seat with your feet two feet below

- you sat on your bum in the bath and the water covered you up to your chest – very comfortable. Like a comfortable chair in hot water! Then supper at the hotel was the absolute worst spaghetti I have ever tasted! Odd??

-

We were completely deaf and disoriented when we got off the North Star in Pisa – and completely “not with it” when we arrived in Egypt. We were told to wear “winter serge. “over there.” – see picture below!

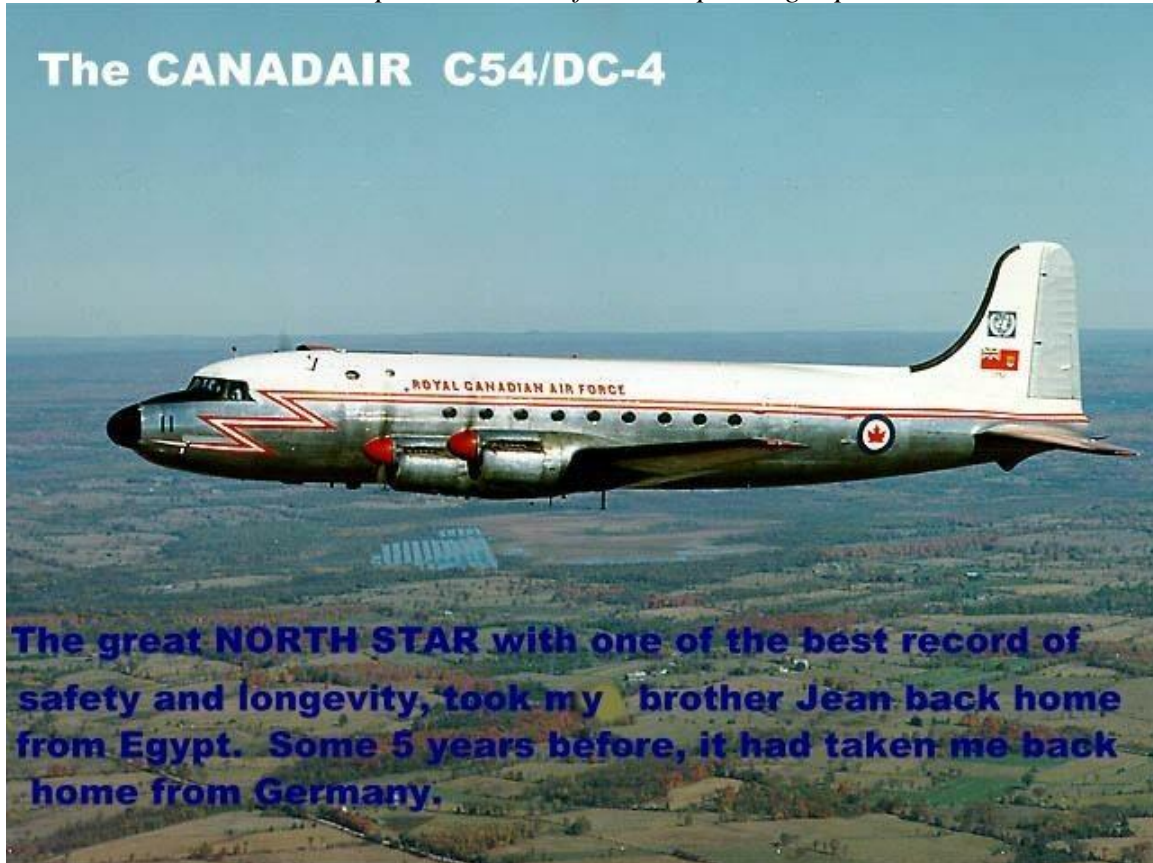


Observation:

Make sure your troops arrive in condition to fight at destination –or at least be semi rested.

We arrived in El Arish completely stressed out and tired and morally and physically depressed.

We were sent on the noisiest plane that ever flew as a passenger plane- the North Star –



from Marville to El Arish Egypt – it was really a cargo plane with us “replacements” in canvas and aluminum bar bucket seats. If you are sending troops to a foreign assignment it is not a good way to send them steerage class – these troops will arrive already” in the hole” emotionally and physically to begin a difficult assignment .The unplanned stop over in Pisa saved us from arriving completely” bagged. “

Chapter 3 Arrival in Egypt

Next day – the big day –off to Egypt via Athens. We were thoroughly deaf by now and rattled in more ways than one. Good psychological way by military to prepare us for El Arish airport! The North Star had Rolls Royce Merlins in a DC- 6 frame. And were the engines noisy. Air Canada tried the North star for a while – but the pilot had to hand a

card around to all the passengers because nothing could be heard over the internal PA system

We arrived over coast of Egypt not 10 miles west of airport –good navigating. I looked out of the window and there was a scene from Lawrence of Arabia. So help me there was sand as far as you could see and an Arab on a camel in the middle of this wasteland.

The door opened and a blast of heat and noise hit us- as the Arab workmen yelled at each other to push the steps up to the side of the airplane. And flies came in- flies everywhere – and flies were not to leave me for my entire tour. Never got used to them landing on your face. And the smell – and heat – 120 F was the norm at the end of the runway.

We parked the North Star at the far end of the hangar which at the time appeared odd – more of the reason why explained later.





**Hangar at
RCAF El Arish 1962**



**Caribou at El Arish
1961-2**

Old pictures of El Arish airport – about 10 miles inland from our Camp called Marina

Welcome to Egypt –my new home to serve peace and Canada for a year-or so I thought.

Captain Bob Emberley a RCASC Captain and the one I was to replace was needless to say “happy to see me” I was called immediately “Pinkey”. (Pink because that was to be the colour of our skin with our first sunburn on our lower arms and faces.) There was a bored looking Egyptian Immigration Officer at the bottom of the ramp – supposedly his main job was to check for Jewish names on manifest – but I doubt he could even read English).Bob Emberley told me he was not supposed to come on board the North star as it was technically United Nations and therefore neutral turf.

This was my first introduction “ real life “ up close to the Egyptian – Israeli problem –or the Arab – Israeli problem or the Palestinian – Israeli problem. All had different agendas I was to find.

And we – Canada – were not so good either –here is me a couple of days after I arrived. Notice the Canadian Bush hat, which kept the sun off my eyes –but NOT the bottom of my face or my neck. I am also wearing a NATO red and black armband –saying “movement control”. The only problem was most of our peace keeper fellow Countries did NOT belong to NATO- how stupid to have me wear this(I did for 2 days – then ditched it) Finland/Indonesia/Yugoslavia /Sweden /Brazil to name some – did NOT belong to NATO !!



Chapter 4 Peacekeepers and El Arish

We drove into Marina the Quarters of 115 ATU – the RCAF squadron. The living quarters were by the sea about 15 kilometers from the UN and Egyptian shared Airport. The UN side of the airport was guarded by a lonely group of Indian Army – a platoon of soldiers. Yugoslav soldiers guarded the Marina Camp – the Yugo's had a large camp down the road from Marina. Both the Indian soldiers and the Yugos impressed me – they were business like and well trained.

Both the airport and the camp Marina had been built by the British – probably WW2 but rumour had it both had been started WW1 – who will ever know. The UN had taken them over and – at Marina anyway – painted UNEF in blue lettering on white background on the roof.

We passed a dead donkey on the road on the way in – a week later the same donkey was there –welcome to Egypt!

Observations

More on training before you enter a foreign country and culture and “culture shock”

As a 25 year old “peacekeepers” had been thrown into this complicated situation. The Arabs and Jews had been fighting since 1948.

*My generation was the generation of idealism –Lester Pearson and his UN Peace Prize – Kennedy and his “Peace Corps” – full of idealism and “we could make a difference”. This was before Bosnia, which was our baptism to fire as peace **makers**- we failed – the Dutch failed even worse! Then Kuwait and the First Gulf War – the – God help us Afghanistan.*

Chapter 5

El Arish Air base and El Arish Camp (called Marina)



Picture is taken outside of Marina Camp gate – Yugoslav Guard can be made out to the right centre of picture.

The airbase was about 15 kilometers from where we stayed. Why? – Who knows? The Egyptians occupied part of the Airbase and the UN another. Actually quite simple – they occupied one runway and we – the UN occupied another. Since the two runways were in the shape of an **X** we were at the end of one **X** and they were at the end of the other **X**.

All well and good – except they had the “good “ runway- the one built by the British god knows when – WW1 ? and we had the new runway – built by the Egyptians and not exactly up to standard. A visiting Yugoslav airplane had a tire go right through the runway while taxing –so you can imagine how much base and asphalt they had put on “our “ runway.

So the North Star could NOT be parked at the UN part of the airport – but had to be parked overnight at the British made end of the tarmac or runway – about a mile from the small UN building and hangar. At night when the North Star was “over knighting” the plane had to be guarded by the Indian soldiers. I learned to take them out at night – usually a squad of them – and explain to NCO or officer each time – once a week – what had to be done. Guard the plane from “Break and enter” !! – the Egyptians had broken in a week before I arrived and ransacked the unguarded plane. The Egyptian police had hired a Bedouin to follow the tracks of the thief and had followed his tracks for miles till he lost them in the town of El Arish saw this tracker – he could distinguish even camel tracks from the imprint – quite incredible in sand and hard packed small rocks – but they could do it well. I learned the Bedouin or Bedu were incredible workers and intelligent – much better workers than the local Egyptians.

We became familiar with some of the Egyptian airmen and pilots –one airman approached me with a coke bottle and asked for me to fill it with a some of our gasoline from my Citroen car which I used as “my jeep” I asked “why”?. He said it was for his hemorrhoids – I told him to wait a minute- and got him some aviation hi-octane gas. I guess it worked well as he became an instant “friend”. A few months later we invited the Egyptian Mig pilots over to the RCAF Mess for a drink – we found out that most of the operational pilots had fewer hours than our Canadian pilots had received in the first half of Canadian pilot training.

At the Airport there was an Indian infantry platoon of first Poona Horse. They invited us over for a volleyball game – and we went out of courtesy. They had a camp just outside the airport and stayed there for months. All they had was one volleyball and a net and played all day – they were so good they could have entered the Olympics.

During our Canadian versus India scratch game (we were awful) the Indians were ahead by about 50 points. During our lemon squash half time break I saw the Indian Officer speaking quietly but firmly at the Indian players and got “the general drift “– he was castigating them for not being polite and beating us. In the next half balls were bouncing

off the star player of India 's head and the other players – who would look over at lieutenant who would beam. We tied the game!

These are the same soldiers who would guard our Canadian North Star at the opposite end of the runway overnight. The Indian soldiers would camp out underneath the North Star all night – our instructions were simple “-we said to the Indian Guard “*See me – pointing to my blue beret*” Canadian face “– *see my sergeant –pointing to him-if you see anyone else approaching –shoot*”

The only trick part was the next morning approaching them – they cocked their rifles and pointed as we approached – “*See its me-* I would holler – in a firm yet fervent voice- hoping none of them needed glasses – which they probably did. As a reward we let them sit in the North star – most had never been on an airplane before having come to India on a boat.

Observation

One learned quickly the local customs and traditions and habitat and “creatures and animals”

*I was sitting in the common latrine of stall after stall to “go to the bathroom”. I saw a Crab like creature go scurrying by my feet –I jumped on the toilet- I had not been taught the difference between a harmless land crab which were everywhere and a **scorpion**.*

I had not been taught to shake out my shoes or desert boots to ensure a scorpion or poisonous snake had not curled up in the warmth for the night! This I learned to do every morning. I brushed my teeth with Canadian Club as one could not trust ANY water in your mouth.

The snakes were called the ‘three step” snake – after you were bitten- three steps and you were dead.

Don’t try to “go native” or be one of them or you will be ridiculed. But understand their ways – sometimes a bit of a culture shock – but they won’t change so you might as well adapt. We wore Canadian blue bush hats and blue berets – absolutely useless in the hot sun and sun that burns all your face. A brim merely covers the eyes from the sun. We needed the Australian Akubra wide brimmed hat –or the Arabic cloth table cloth hat with the camel hobble which is what the cord is that keeps it on.

We quickly traded our Canadian bush pants and shirt with the Indian Army – they had loose woven long cotton pants and cotton shirts and were 100 % cooler. Adapt to local conditions. We got comfortable in dress quickly.

We had the Arab shoe maker make us desert boots by simple expedient of stepping on a piece of cardboard – he would draw out our foot outline and make a pair of desert boots By the next morning The only problem was they lasted all of one to two months then fell apart



Me and my “jeep” my Citroen – the” une et demi” or “one and a half” horse power which is all it had – the seat was a piece of cloth strung by springs between metal posts.

Chapter 6 Rafah

Rafah or Camp Rafah was, in 1965 –66 the main hub of the UNEF 1 Operations for the Peacekeeping efforts for the Canadians. There were all elements of the Canadian Army represented here – RCAC – the Recce squadron /RCEME/RCASC both supply and

logistics/RCAMC /Cpro C the Provost Corps – even the Postal Corps /Dental Corps and the Chaplaincy corps. What must the Moslems have thought when we put up two identical churches side by side in Rafah – one Catholic and the other Protestant! The Church bells were supplied by discarded bells from two Canadian CPR steam train engines – a generous gift – and I wonder if they are still in Rafah ,,,or where these train bells ended up?

A double fence of the” Danor Battalion “–a combined battalion of Danish and Norwegians, guarded the Camp. The Danors were complete with police dogs. The Egyptians still got in regularly and stole whatever was not nailed down regularly – how? –Who knows.





For the first five days I was to stay in Rafah before relieving Bob Emberley as Movement Control Officer in El Arish. I was put on a cot in the “living room” as I was a transient in the RCASC Officers Quarters – called Playtime Villa – Playtime was the radio code for RCASC. (Someone has bizarre sense of humour)



I was not accepted, as I was not to be part of RCASC Rafah contingent – but had a 5-day insight how they lived and survived. I saw their compound filled with 8 different kinds or types of vehicles – I was told there were 14 kinds!



and did not envy the mechanics: English Bedford's /U.S. Dodge trucks/ French Citroens/ Canadian 2 ½ ton trucks and so on.



What a mess of trucks/jeeps /cars – including the Canadian ordered Jeep the M151 for the Hussars



And we , as 25 year old “peacekeepers” had been thrown into this complicated situation. The Arabs and Jews had been fighting since 1949 – the Philistines and Judea/Israel had been fighting since the Bible – we were – as Canadians – “babes in the woods”. We should have learned in Cyprus that there is a difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking. The first cardinal rule of peacekeeping is that the people in the country you are in have to “want you there” and “not as occupiers”. In Cyprus I believe from what I saw the Turks and the Greeks wanted us there. In Sinai and Egypt the Egyptians wanted us there – Israel did NOT.

Also my generation was the generation of *idealism* –Lester Pearson and his UN Peace Prize – Kennedy and his “Peace Corps” – full of idealism and “we could make a difference’. This was before Bosnia, which was our baptism to fire as peace **makers**- we failed – the Dutch failed even worse! Then Kuwait and the First Gulf War – the – God help us Afghanistan.

Wider view of the "Water Hole" Rafah



" Water Hole " Rafah.



Picture of water hole at UNEF Camp Rafah the locals were allowed to use – these are probably the “ Danor” Battalion who guarded Rafah Camp – the blue helmet liner headdress was discarded quite quickly into the “campaign”- too hot

After 5 days I was off to El Arish none the wiser – complete with bed bugs from a grubby sleeping bag they gave me at Playtime Villa to use. Got very little by way of kit – a blue Canadian bush hat (I wore 6 times) a blue scarf (I wore never) and the QM orderly asked if I was Army or Air Force – I was issued a fly swatter. Air Force was issued Raid spray.

Same thing in El Arish – the Air Force wore shorts and stockings but the RCAF on hearing I was Army said “sorry *old man* – no shorts for you”. I wore long pants my entire tour – but cool lightly woven Indian long pants.

Observations

Morale is dependent on how well the troops are looked after by their home country/unit /regiment.

The Army food was not as good as Air Force food – nor the quarters (sheets at El Arish – sleeping bags Rafah) and the prize –

- *fly swatters Army*
- *spray for bugs Air Force*

I suppose any military is like that – different arms have different standards. It was so bad for feeding at one time that the El Arish Air Force Unit “discouraged” army visitors from Rafah and Gaza- the RCAF would supplement their food from their flights to Beirut /Cyprus/Pisa (and American PX there) and so on.



Bedouin or Bedu tent on road to El Arish women and goats one side – men the other!

Chapter 7

Now it time to take up my duties as Movement Control Officer in El Arish - composed of an Egyptian /UNEF shared airbase about 10 kilometers inland (guarded by a platoon of Indian soldiers who lived there)

and

El Arish camp called Marina, which was close to –but not on – the sea. (The Yugoslav Army guarded Marina). The “Yugos” have their camp just down the road. They also provide an outpost or observation post in the middle of the Sinai at Ras El Naq and also at El Kuntilla. These two outposts are on the Egyptian side of the Israeli/Egyptian border.

The camp had a number of buildings put up by the British in WW2. They were cool as they were made of thick walls of sandy concrete bricks and very high ceiling – so all the heat would go up to the ceiling. The only problem was the small windows to keep out the sun and heat. Believe it or not mosquitoes are a real problem and I am told we are to take a malaria pill every day.

My first night was interesting – the stars were incredibly bright – no pollution here. There were lots of birds and it was nice to hear them at night and in the morning. Where the birds had their nests I have no idea – no trees! The birds would see an airplane taxiing in and would be making a nest in the tail portion before the engines were off! It is an important job of the ground crew to take out the nests from the Caribou and Otter aircraft before they take off – a tail fin that does not move because of a nest can cause real problems!

The picture below is “me” just arrived –March 1965 – notice the red and black NATO Movement Control armband- I only wore it once – I thought it not a good idea to wear as the Indian and Yugoslavs were definitely not NATO – nor were the Brazilians or the Swedish soldiers.

Also notice the Canadian blue bush hat – good for Canadian bush –but too hot and heavy for desert-plus no protection for lower face or neck from he sun. I have already also you will notice picked up a pair of “desert boots” – which the Egyptian workers would make for you overnight. They might last a month if you were lucky but were light and cool and good in the sand, which I am standing on. The UN badge on hat was metal by the way – and added to weight.



There were 11 RCAF Officers plus myself – I was part of their Unit – which was called not a Squadron but **115** ATU – Air Transport Unit.



The above is a good shot of our Quarters. On the roof – when I went up the one time to look –(too hot) had “UNEF” painted on it in large identification letters and a big cistern to store water. I looked in at the water and saw lovely green mold floating on top. No wonder we were told to be careful with the water. We could not use it to brush out teeth. The best thing for brushing teeth was a bottle of Canadian club rye- what a way to start your day.

We never used ice –here or anywhere in UNEF or Middle East for that matter. Despite all our precautions all of us got mild dysentery or “*gypo gut*”- which meant you had “the runs” and also kept the weight down.

The RCAF food was good – no complaints there. The pilots would purchase fresh vegetables and canned goods and condiments in Beirut and would stock up the Messes – the Officers/Sergeants and the Airmen’s Mess. No one ever complained about the food at Marina!



Above our “garden” carefully looked after by one worker who waterd it and spent rest of day raking the sand! Steps behind are to roof of eating Mess where we watched movies from each night- the Officers Mess was also up there until new Officers (drinking) Mess was constructed.

The Canadian Army in Rafah and Gaza was not so lucky but their food was not so bad. The Canadians were well looked after – considering the circumstances – for food and

medical and dental. 115 ATU had their own doctor – he was one of the 11 officers. A Canadian dentist was available in Rafah – and he had the latest dental equipment.



Pictures above in order are our “garden “ outside the Quarters- the roof of the Mess hall where we watched a movie most nights and construction of a new building – the new Officers Mess!!- in background you can see how close Camp marina was to Mediterranean Sea and railroad and road to El Arish town



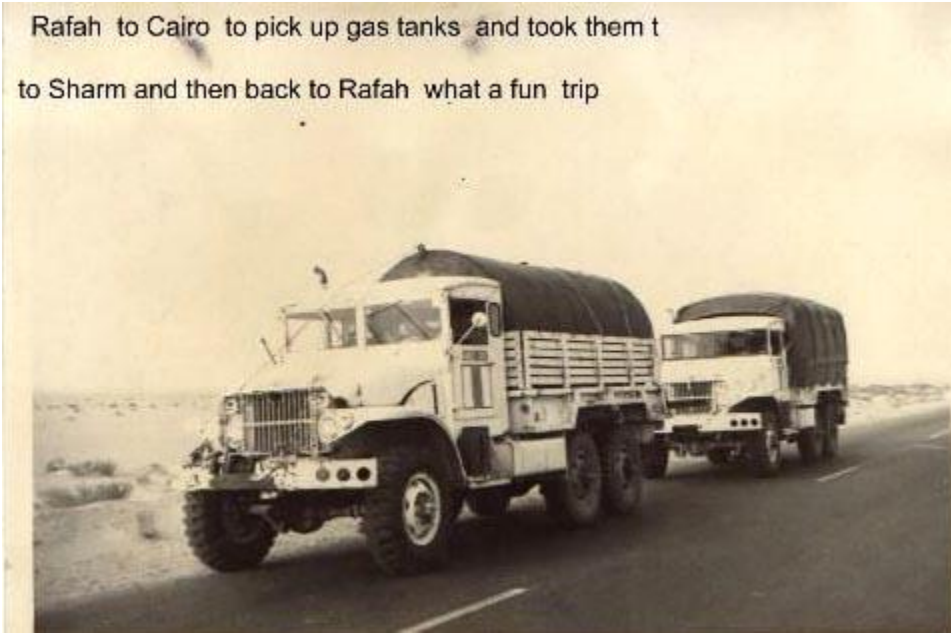
Picture through the windshield of downtown El Arish town

Observation

Settling in was –when you are young – fairly easy. We were all lonely for home and our wives and loved ones – and we counted the days till we were to leave. I never met anyone who wanted to stay – although there were some people who did 2 or even 3 tours. They were nuts! A tour in those days was a full year – so anyone that was over then in my time actually did 2 tours!

Let me explain – shortly after 1965 the Canadian military changed the time of an official “tour” to 6 months – so all us UNEF people can wear a “2” on our ribbon – as we are credited with two tours. A year in the desert was really too long!

Rafah to Cairo to pick up gas tanks and took them t
to Sharm and then back to Rafah what a fun trip



I drove from El Arish every Friday night to Rafah – about 60 km –to play poker. When I think how dangerous it was I shudder now –particularly returning alone at 1 a.m. with my poker winnings and going through all the Egyptian Army checkpoints! The Egyptians never traveled in their vehicles at night with their headlights on - they considered it quite rude of you to have headlights on!!

I was a good poker player – then! The Major RCASC who was CO and I were usually the last two in game. One night I had a good hand and so did he –he thought – he was a bit short of cash – so he threw in “my next move was to Beirut for 6 months”- I gave him a \$100 buck deal on that one. I won. One month later he kept his word –I was off to Beirut!!

Chapter 8 : Trip to Jerusalem

Trip To Jerusalem 3-4 Apr 65

We, consisting of 2 Officers and 30 other ranks, departed El Arish at 8.45 AM 3 Apr. It was a miserable, cold, rainy day. The trip to Jerusalem took us 45 minutes and was fairly bumpy at times.

We arrived at Jerusalem Airport at 9.30 and were met by a representative of Kim's Travel Agency and were immediately transported to our Hotel on a short rest prior to our first tour. The Taxis used for the trip from the Airport to the Hotel and for the duration of the tours thereafter, were mostly of latest American models and the drivers were experienced drivers.

The Hotel where we stayed at, called the "New Orient House" was very good and the food was excellent.

The first tour started at 1030 H and consisted of the following: (1) Visit to the old city of Jerusalem entering via Herod's Gate and visiting Pilate's Palace. (2) Judgement Hall. (3) The Flagellation. (4) Ecce Homo. (5) Walk Along Via Dolorosa (The Way Of The Cross). (6) The Russian Excavations. (7) The Holy Sepulchre and (8) Mount Calvary. During this whole tour it rained and hailed almost consistently.

Our guide was very good but seemed to spend too much time trying to sell to us. I have

never seen any place quite so commercialized in all my life. It certainly makes one stop and ponder if Religion is what it is supposed to be. Everybody is trying to take you aside to sell you some kind of trinket that such & such a Saint touched or a rock from the site of such & such an event, etc., and the prices for these are out of this world. (Rather appropriate, since this is supposedly the Holy City.)

At approx 1.15 PM we returned to the Hotel for dinner which was very palatable and very welcome.

The afternoon tour consisted of the following: (1) Entering the old city of Jerusalem via St Stephen's Gate. (2) Visiting the church of St Anne. (3) The Garden of Gethsemane. (4) The Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thence to (5) Bethlehem, visiting (6) Rachel's Tomb, (7) The Shepherd's Field. In Bethlehem, we visited the (8) The Church of the Nativity. (9) The Manger. (10) The Chapel of St Jerome and a few other places which I can't remember at present.

In St Stephen's Church, we were privileged (or so we were told) to get a view of a replica of the old city of Jerusalem as it used to be in the early days. The priest, Franciscan I believe, who explained it to us was fluent in the English language with a slight European accent. He was very interesting. He pointed out a place which used to be inside the old city wall, but is now outside, called the Temple of Evil Council (because this was where Jesus Christ

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